

Memorandum



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Director's Sec'y _____

Secret

To : Mr. Young *[Signature]*

Date 4/21/81

From *[Signature]* L. Divan

Subject : "THE STING MAN: INSIDE ABSCAM"
BY ROBERT W. GREENE
BOOK REVIEW

[Signature]

PURPOSE: To set forth information about captioned book, particularly those portions relating to the FBI.

SYNOPSIS: "The Sting Man" is the Abscam story told from the viewpoint of its central con man, Melvin Weinberg. The book first details the life of Weinberg before he became a Bureau informant and then devotes its last eight chapters to recounting Abscam. Author Greene has provided substantially an accurate, balanced account of the FBI's most famous undercover operation.

RECOMMENDATION: For information.

APPROVED:

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DETAILS: Robert W. Greene

Mr. Greene is listed in "Who's Who in America" as a native New Yorker born July 12, 1929. He is a writer, editor, and congressional staff investigator. Greene is the author of two prior books, "Naked Came the Stranger" (1969) and "The Heroin Trail" (1973).

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D. L. Divan to Mr. Young Memo
"THE STING MAN: INSIDE ABSCAM"
BY ROBERT W. GREENE

"The Sting Man: Inside Abscam"

Robert W. Greene
E. P. Dutton
New York, 1981
268 pages (with illustrations)

Author Greene, with the assistance of Melvin Weinberg, has produced the first definitive book on Abscam. The book was finished in January, 1981, after the five major Abscam trials but before Senator Harrison Williams came to trial.

The book begins with four chapters devoted to Weinberg, before Abscam, beginning with six-year old Melvin pulling his first scam on his mother. Greene narrates Weinberg's early years in school, his military experiences in the Navy, and his gradual ascent from a small time chiseler (breaking windows at night so his glass company could replace them the next day) to the international swindler.

Much of the chapters on Weinberg's pre-Abscam life are apparently based largely on what Weinberg told Greene and his tales of large-scale adventures in South America, Red China, and in the company of Italy's Red Brigade fund-raisers may be close to the truth.

By the mid-1970's Weinberg was running an investor swindle as a continuing operation under the front of "London Investors" with a permanent, plush office in Long Island, New York. The scam specialized in front-end swindles and bogus certificates of deposit, and according to Weinberg it netted \$500,000 the first year in what was "...the biggest, sweetest con game ever born and a helluva money-maker." Despite his luck and caution, in February, 1977, he was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury for wire fraud, mail fraud, and conspiracy and an arrest warrant was also issued for his mistress.

Chapter 5 begins with Greene's succinct analysis of FBI Agents who formerly "... (had) Masonic rings, tautly knotted

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ties and unswerving devotion to the Bureau" while J. Edgar Hoover was Director. Now, however, the Agents are: "big-city ethnics, particularly the Irish...upwardly mobile sons of (craftsmen)...product of Jesuit colleges...(with) flexibility, imagination, and a sense of honor." Relief Supervisor John Good of New York City (who became SSRA in Hauppauge during Abscam) enters in Chapter 5 and Greene and Weinberg lavish praise upon him throughout the rest of the book. Good created what was to become Abscam by scribbling a note on a memo to have Weinberg interviewed as to his current informant potential. Greene emphasizes at this point something he will detail throughout the book, that Abscam began as a simple exercise in catching crooks and it did that for two years. Although it netted several Congressmen in its last six months, it never was a "plot" against the legislature.

Greene tells the story of Abscam's early successes recovering stolen art works, uncovering a murder plot, and locating phoney stock certificates. Early indictments were held off so as not to blow Weinberg's cover. Gradually the operation increased in agent manpower, in funding from Headquarters, and in scope of its activities. Weinberg and his handling agents were now working out of New York and Miami. Slowly the idea of the wealthy Arab principal began to evolve with Weinberg and the FBI fleshing out the details. Abdul Enterprises, Limited, was created as a corporation and moved into a large office with a lavish (if untouchable) bank balance at the Chase Manhattan Bank.

The selection of the various Agents who would play the Arab, his assistants, and the crew of "his" yacht are carefully told. Weinberg's constant complaints about the Bureau's frugality, length of time to make decisions, and the morally-upright Special Agents are all delineated by Greene, usually without editorializing.

In ensuing chapters, Greene recounts the Abscam successes in working its way up the hierarchy of the fixers, graft-seekers and conniving middlemen. He recites the mistakes too, including undercover Agent Margo Denedy being identified as an FBI Agent in a news photo, the double-cross of informant

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Joseph Meltzer, and other problems that almost surfaced Abscam before it reached the corruption brokers of Camden, Atlantic City and Washington, D. C.

The corrupt dealings of Mayor Angelo Errichetti of Camden and his scheming associates are set forth as well as other political fixers in New Jersey. Greene even writes of the White House quash (with some assistance of the Attorney General) of the Federal tax case against Kenneth Gibson, the liberal mayor of Newark. The book also gets into other areas that received little, if any, publicity in the media including the U. S. Attorney in Newark, Robert J. Del Tufo whose attitude toward the Federal Strike Force and Abscam "...moved from animosity to outright hostility..." as the undercover operation continued to expose the corrupt-ridden New Jersey political system. Greene hints that Del Tufo's later complaints about entrapment were probably based upon a desire to save New Jersey liberal Democrats from prosecution in an election year.

The Congressional bribe-takers are dealt with in no great detail, with the exception of Senator Williams. Possibly Greene and Weinberg felt that this particular case needed explanation in depth. It is noted this Congressman was the only Abscam defendant who had not gone to trial and been convicted by the time the book was finished.

PERTINENT MENTIONS OF THE FBI

No book could be written about Abscam without the FBI appearing on virtually every other page and such references in this book are, of course, very frequent. The FBI references are so numerous that they are left out of the complete index that appears at the end of the book; however, every FBI Agent mentioned appears in the index.

The characterizations of FBI Agents are Weinberg's opinions, couched in Greene's phraseology: Jack McCarthy ("careful, conservative, cautious" and "cheap"), Myron Fuller ("hopelessly straight-arrow"), Robert Fitzpatrick ("an eternal optimist"), John Good ("creative, energetic" and "result-oriented"), and Anthony Amoroso (an ultimately cool man).

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Most of Weinberg's complaints against the FBI throughout Abscam find their way into this book, but few of them are serious or surprising. Weinberg found FBI Agents to be morally-upright, fiscally conservative, cautious with their money and the government's, obedient to Headquarters, and unable to lie convincingly. Since these characteristics are the exact opposite of Weinberg's personal traits, he finds them particularly irritating. It is doubtful the American reading public will.